Gender dimensions in shrimp farming: a case study of shrimp farm workers in Thailand

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Background

WP1: Project Management
WP2: Scoping and systems overview
WP3: 
WP4: 
dynamics
WP5: 
WP6: 
WP7: 
WP8: 
WP9: Action research
WP10: Improving transparency of trade
WP11: Policy development
WP12: Dissemination

Exploratory/scoping
Integrated Farm Survey
Transition Survey
Face to face survey

Ch3. Systems overview
Ch6. Sustainability perceptions
Ch4. Shrimp & tilapia farming: fulfilling market needs
Ch5. Labour & gender in shrimp farming
Ch6. Sustainability perceptions

206 shrimp farms
117 shrimp farms
30 shrimp farms
18 workers
Shrimp farm workers in Thailand

• Important actors in the shrimp value chain

• Relationship between the shrimp farm owner/operator/manager and the shrimp farm worker is both business-like and familial

• In constant interaction with each other:
  o operation and management of the ponds
  o related to family and social activities within the shrimp farm setting

• Certification schemes include worker welfare in farms - considered at the same level as environmental management, animal welfare, and food safety for sustainable and ethical production of seafood
Men and women are involved all throughout the chain, with varying roles and interactions between and among them*

* No detailed data on numbers of △♀ in each node
Relationships/interactions

- Wife owner/manager, husband assists
- Couple caretaker
- Male owner/manager, wife has own business
Some existing issues

- Insufficient or lack of:
  - Gender disaggregated data
  - Valuation of some aquaculture work, including indirect contribution & benefits
  - Understanding of relations & differences among actors
  - Gender sensitivity in projects, policies, certifications, other activities

- Trend – emerging emphasis on gender mainstreaming and integration in aquaculture initiatives
Global certification schemes

• Best Aquaculture Practices or BAP (Global Aquaculture Alliance)-BAP/GAA
• GlobalGAP

• The main areas covered re: farm workers:
  o workers’ safety and occupation health
  o worker welfare and living conditions
  o legal aspects and documentation
  o knowledge and training

• Not covered:
  o Quality of life
  o Workers’ perceptions with a gender perspective
  o Family of workers who are living with them or helping out with farm work
Questions:

What is the status of men and women shrimp farm workers in relation to the following gender dimensions?

- Access to resources and information
- Knowledge, beliefs, perceptions
- Practices and participation
- Laws, legal rights, policies, institutions
Methodology

- Eighteen workers (6 female, 12 male), both Thai and migrants
- Working in various shrimp farm scales
- Face to face interviews
- Questions designed based on the gender dimensions framework to obtain gender-disaggregated data
## Shrimp farm scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Small</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Large</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of ponds</td>
<td>Up to 2</td>
<td>3 and above</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business ownership</td>
<td>Household/extended family</td>
<td>Household/extended family/external owner</td>
<td>Company/corporate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm management</td>
<td>Household/extended family</td>
<td>Household/extended family/external owner</td>
<td>Hired manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour relations</td>
<td>Up to 2 hired full-time labour</td>
<td>3 and above hired full-time labour</td>
<td>Hired employees/full-time labour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Farm organizational structure

**Small-scale**
- Owner/Operator/Manager*
- Hired worker (male) together with wife

*may also work with his wife instead of hiring Others, but may hire part-time worker for specific jobs

**Medium**
- Owner/Operator/Manager
- Hired Manager (mainly male)
- Technician (male)
- 1 worker (male)/1-2 ponds
- Wife assists in some pond work

**Large**
- Owner/Shareholder
- Hired Manager
- Admin & Lab (female mainly)
- Technician (male)
- 1 worker (male)/1-2 ponds
- Wife assists in some pond work or find jobs elsewhere
- Or both husband and wife are hired
Faces in Farms

Owner-manager

Co-owner & co-manager

Co-owner

Owner / teacher

Manager

Worker

Couple workers

Male worker/ Couple workers?
Legal aspects

International Labour Organization (ILO)

Thai Ministry of Labor
- Department of Employment
- Department of Labour Protection and Welfare

Subdistrict Administrative Organization

- Labor Code: only for work within the system (industry)

- Shrimp farm work:
  - considered outside the industry system (together with agriculture, domestic work, home-based businesses

“Shrimp farmers are doing more than what the law requires re: providing compensation and benefits for the well-being of their workers” – key informant from the Department of Labor Protection and Welfare
About the workers

No. of respondents

Laos  Myanmar  Thailand

Female
Male
Large
Male
Medium
Female
Small
Male
Previous occupations

construction
rice farmer
sugarcane

chicken farm clerk
just graduated
never worked
jobless
fishing vessel housekeeper
technician
# Profile of shrimp farm workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm Scale</th>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Farm worker</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>Take care of ponds (liming, cleaning, feeding, checking) keeping record</td>
<td>Husband is also working in the farm. Both of them take care of the whole farm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Farm worker</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Lao</td>
<td>Take care of ponds (cleaning, feeding, check water)</td>
<td>Wife (Thai) and children stay with him in the farm but only he works in the farm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Farm worker</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>Take care of ponds (cleaning, feeding, check water)</td>
<td>Wife and children stay with him in the farm but only he works in the farm.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Farm Scale</td>
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<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Pond worker and equipment maintenance</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Lao</td>
<td>Take care of 2 ponds, maintenance &amp; repair of all farm equipment</td>
<td>Wife stays with him in the farm, children in Laos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Farm worker</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Lao</td>
<td>Take care of 3 ponds, put feed in autofeeder, cleaning, check feed, shrimp &amp; water, record keeping</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Farm worker</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>Take care of 2 ponds, put feed in autofeeder, check feeding, liming</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Scale</td>
<td>Designation</td>
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<td>Remarks</td>
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<td>-------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Farm worker</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>Take care of 2 ponds, feeding, machine maintenance, check screens, nets, cleaning area</td>
<td>Wife is staying with him and also working in the farm in the inventory/inputs section. Children in home country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Farm worker</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>‘Female’ tasks (her term): measure pH, check water, give feed, turn off aerators, clean area</td>
<td>Husband is also working in the farm. She gets her own salary. Their children are not staying with them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Head worker (11 workers + 1 pond.)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>Check water quality, manage feed</td>
<td>Husband also working in farm. Children in Ubon.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Perceptions on Quality of Life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm Scale</th>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Much better-off</th>
<th>Better-off</th>
<th>OK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lao</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lao</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lao</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Reasons for QOL perceptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional (12x)</th>
<th>Economic (7x)</th>
<th>Social (7x)</th>
<th>Physical (4x)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No pressure, less stressful, happiness factor</td>
<td>Spend less money, more to save &amp; send back home</td>
<td>Owners are kind</td>
<td>Mechanisation reduced workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can live together with spouse</td>
<td>Additional income such as bonus, benefits</td>
<td>Enjoyable working with employers &amp; other workers</td>
<td>Work is easier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More freedom, independence</td>
<td>Non-monetary benefits such as housing, water, electricity, meals</td>
<td>Respect among each other in the farm</td>
<td>On-going production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More comfortable life</td>
<td>Fully paid for effort made</td>
<td>Familial atmosphere living in the farm</td>
<td>Better living conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes a person more mature and responsible</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Closer to nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No problems faced</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peaceful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Salaries & Wages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm Scale</th>
<th>Salary Range¹ (Baht)</th>
<th>Bonus (Baht/kg produced)</th>
<th>About the Workers</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>3,000 to 9,000/month</td>
<td>1 to 2</td>
<td>Female, Myanmar: 5,000 Bt/mo</td>
<td>Based on no. of ponds and no. of years worked</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Medium     | 5,000 to 8,000/month | 1 to 3                  | Male, Myanmar: 4,000 Bt/mo, 1 pond; 2 Bt/kg bonus
Male, Laos: 6,000 Bt/mo, 1 pond; 2 Bt/kg bonus | Based on no. of ponds; couples are assigned 2-3 ponds |
| Large      | 300/day, paid monthly | 0.75                    | Male, Myanmar     | 1-2 ponds/worker depending on performance |

¹ Salary range for small and medium farms includes a bonus based on the amount of shrimp produced.
Salary issue

Most small scale farms:

- couple is hired by the farm owner
- to manage the whole farm by themselves (< 5 ponds)
- paid as a couple, wherein the payment is given on a monthly basis
- either paid for the whole farm or per pond
- For example: 5,000 Baht (US$156)/month if 1 pond only
- >2 or more ponds: 9,000 to 10,000 Baht (US$281-312)/month
- + bonus commission
Sources of information and knowledge

- Hands-on training from employers, managers, experienced co-workers
- Technical meetings and discussions with the team on-farm
- Company technicians and salespersons who come to the farms
- Consultation and discussions with other shrimp farm workers, face to face or by phone
- Watching television (technical as well as Thai language)

*Reading materials limited for non-Thais
No learning for wives accompanying husbands
Access to information

- Limited for migrant workers due to language
- Workers learn on farm, be trained by owners/managers but not wives even if they help
- Mobile phones help to contact other workers for sharing information
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender issues in farms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner and or Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai/migrant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to opportunities e.g. training, learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary from farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits (bonus, housing, water, medical, legal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of life based on needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social protection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other issues need to be addressed

• couple payments

• legal documentation/status of migrant workers

• access to opportunities and skills development

• freedom of association/representation
Perceptions & decisions

• Male manager’s perception:
  o a single woman could not work in the shrimp farm setting, as it is a male-dominated workplace
  o single women or women who are alone will also not want to come as the farm is far from the town and they do not feel safe

• Decision making and control of assets:
  o women entrusted with salaries that husbands earn
  o workers consult their spouses when purchasing large items
  o wives are responsible for marketing, transactions to remit cash back to their own countries
  o most financial decisions made by wives as they are entrusted with the money to keep and save
Thank you.